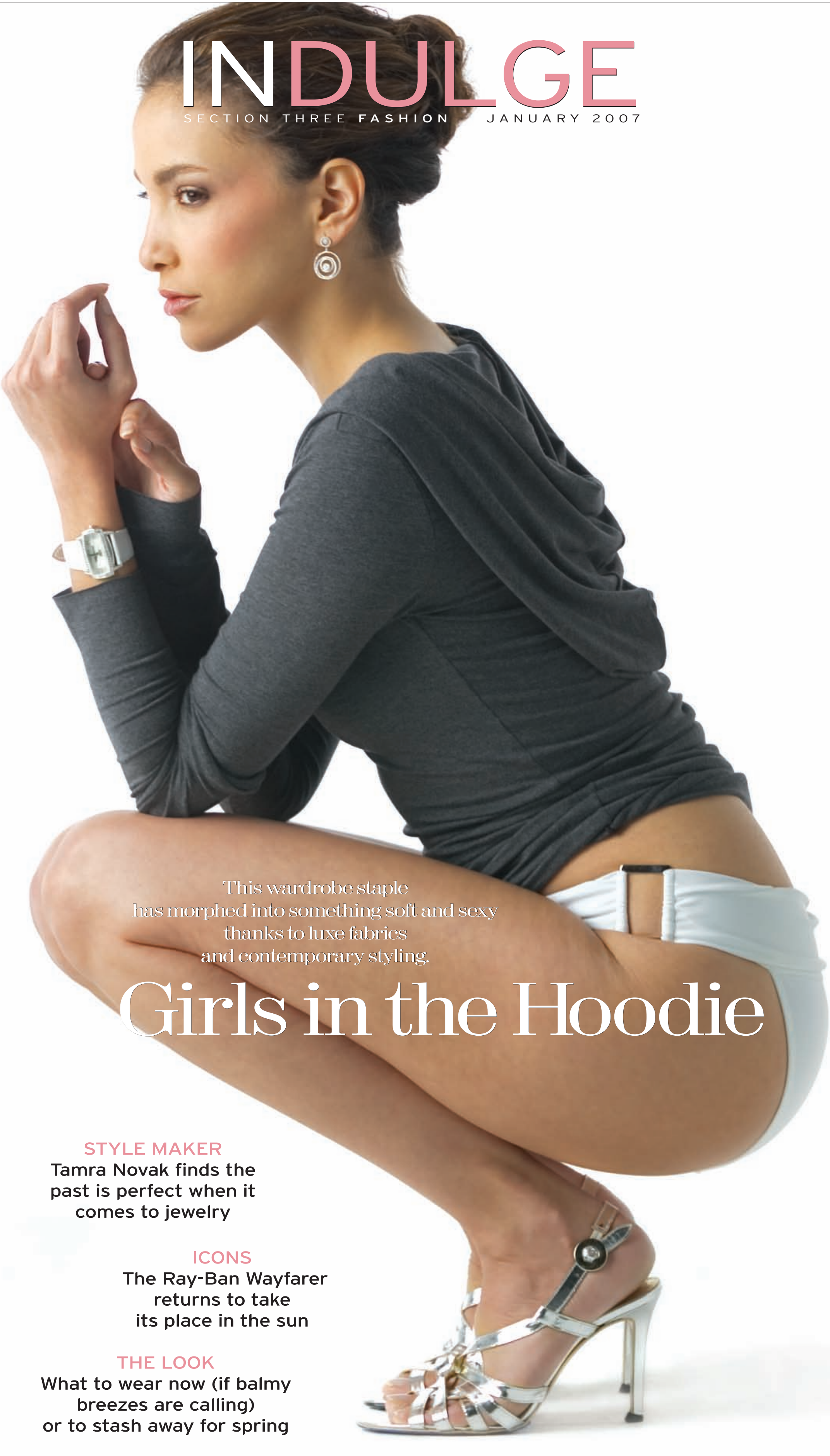


INDULGE

SECTION THREE FASHION

JANUARY 2007



This wardrobe staple has morphed into something soft and sexy thanks to luxe fabrics and contemporary styling.

Girls in the Hoodie

STYLE MAKER

Tamra Novak finds the past is perfect when it comes to jewelry

ICONS

The Ray-Ban Wayfarer returns to take its place in the sun

THE LOOK

What to wear now (if balmy breezes are calling) or to stash away for spring



Jewelry designer Tamra Novak crafts elaborate pieces of jewelry in her sunroom at her Fort Worth home.

STYLEMAKER

Past Perfect

BY KARALEE MILLER PHOTOS BY KHAMPHA BOUAPHANH

When it comes to jewelry, new and old are a harmonic mix for Tamra Novak.

Tamra Novak loves jewelry. Always has. As a teenager, she would steal away to her mother's jewelry box to hunt for the perfect pair of clip earrings, only to attach them to chains or necklaces, creating a fresh, outside-the-box approach to accessorizing. A few years ago, she took a poncho and, rather than donning it in the normal fashion, wore it as a skirt, using a vintage brooch to hold it in place around her slender frame.

That knack for tweaking the traditional continues today. Novak, now 47, celebrates the one-year anniversary this month of her custom-crafted jewelry collection, *A Touch of Vintage*, which offers one-of-a-kind, handmade necklaces assembled by mixing and matching new and vintage pieces — cameos, glass pearls, natural stones, even an antique pocket knife. The result: substantial, yet stylish, works of collage art. One of her most recent creations was crafted using a vintage rhinestone belt as the necklace chain; a round porcelain enamel pin as a soft focal point; and a charm of a watch face from the 1950s as an unexpected element. A few pieces in her collection start at \$75; most however range from \$100 to \$400, with some elaborate designs topping \$500.

"I don't make traditional jewelry, that's for sure," says Novak, a native of Everman who now calls Fort Worth home. "It's about the

creativity and the art, and that you can't mass produce. I don't want to do cookie-cutter jewelry."

Mission accomplished.

Each design looks to be the result of intense labor and craftsmanship. Delicate wiring holds the pieces together — necklaces can be made using up to four or five parts — creating one seamless unit. She takes her passion for jewels and baubles along on her many travels, collecting pieces from several destinations, including London, Germany and Israel.

"It's like a treasure hunt looking for different pieces to use," she says. "I like my jewelry to be a little bit funky but tasteful, elegant but fun at the same time. I like lots of *stuff*. You can tell that with the jewelry. I thrive on variety. I love to have choices."

Those choices, Novak says, often can lead to impromptu changes and alterations to her varied designs.

"Once I get started on one, I start thinking about another," she says, sitting at her wrought-iron worktable on wheels. "I think, 'Oh, this piece doesn't quite work here, but, oh, it would be great on this other necklace.' I find myself going back and forth."

She works out of a spacious sunroom in the Mira



A Czechoslovakian brooch with more than 70 rhinestone sets, vintage pearls and a vintage gold tone with white enamel rose necklace make up this substantial piece. Far left, an intact 1930s heart brooch with multi-color rhinestones and pearls, semi-precious stones and rosary beads with a crystal drop create a divine look.



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Vista home in southwest Fort Worth that she shares with her husband, Dan, a marketing executive with IBM. In her organized workspace, pins, rhinestones, chains and other materials are laid out with precision. A desktop magnifying glass ensures each intricate detail will be examined with care. Her work typically takes place at night, while her husband studies for his Ph.D.

"Besides," she says with a demure laugh, "I'm not much of a morning person. I don't like to set my alarm."

She met Dan while playing in a volleyball league in Dallas.

"I've always been a jock," says Novak, who attended Texas Wesleyan on a volleyball scholarship. "I was a heavy-duty volleyball athlete. I never really knew what else I could do because I was so preoccupied with sports."

The two married in 1989 and, a few years later, moved to Colorado and then to Atlanta. While there, Novak, a certified master gardener at age 30, took up topiaries. She started growing and selling them, something she continues to dabble in on occasion. In 1996, while still in Atlanta, she found her inner jewelry designer. She stumbled upon a bead store in the city and soon found herself at the counter, sketching a design, later brought to fruition by a store employee. The compliments she received while wearing her work were humbling and unexpected.

A career in jewelry design is a huge leap from Novak's previous job, which had her working for more than 10 years as a property accountant manager for an equitable real estate investment company in Dallas. Novak chalks up her flair for designing to continuous practice, art and design classes and a little help from above.

"I thought, 'Lord, you're going to make the jewelry. I'll just be the

tool,' " she says.

Armed with her faith, Novak hit the pavement, going from one local boutique to another hoping to find just the right location to house her jewelry. She also drums up attention to her business by wearing her jewelry everywhere she goes, as do her friends.

"Self promotion is not my area of expertise," she admits.

While jewelry is a priority, Novak hasn't dismissed her other great love — gardening, elements of which can be found throughout her work.

"I'm attracted to florals. I'm really into nature," she says. "And I love a touch of red. I have to be careful, though, or everything would have red in it."

Novak and her husband returned to North Texas in 2001, building their home in Fort Worth and doing all the landscaping themselves. They share their home with two dogs: Dusty, an 11-year-old papillon, and Randi Girl, a 1½-year-old toy poodle. Novak's two step-children live in Austin.

A year into the jewelry business, Novak says the learning curve has been enjoyable. The one drawback? Parting with so many beloved creations.

"I had to decide early on if I was going to have a business or not," she says. "I would say that one particular piece was my favorite and that there was no way I was going to part with it. And then I'd always end up selling it."

She's not complaining, though.

"I know this isn't something that always happens to people," she says of the warm reception she's received the past year. "I'm very thankful for all that I've received."

As for the future, Novak plans to take metal-smithing classes so she can learn to make other types of jewelry.

"Making jewelry will be the second half of my life," she says. "The first half was sports. The second looks to be more on the creative side."

TAMRA'S FAVORITES

Restaurant: Mi Cocina; "We love Mexican food."
TV show: *Lost* and *Grey's Anatomy*; "I never used to watch TV. I only started watching TV in the last two years when my husband started studying for his Ph.D."

Movie: The *Rocky* films; "I once had a German shepherd I named Rocky."

Music: New Age and classical
Destination: The beach; "Especially San Diego. I just love California. It's the volleyball lover in me."

Jewelry: "I love cameos. I love the female profile."

Other loves: Gardening and designing flower beds; active member of Southcliff Baptist Church, where she works in the women's ministry

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